DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 055 142 UD 011 848

AUTHOR Wildman, Louis
TITLE Disciplinary Problems in Urban Ghetto Schools.
INSTITUTION School Information and Research Service, Seattle, Wash.
PUB DATE 18 Jun 71
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Class Management; *Discipline; Discipline Policy; *Discipline Problems; *Educational Environment; Experimental Curriculum; Inner City; Peer Groups; *Urban Education; Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

In this article are described the group dynamics of the inner-city school by focusing on hypothetical examples of teacher peer group and student peer group support. Also included is a discussion of possible ways for improving the educational environment. It is recommended that: (1) students choose between an array of differentially controlled learning environments; (2) a curriculum which offers the inexperienced student concrete experiences--sometimes vocational--necessary for theoretical analysis; and, (3) standardized educational accountability within expository type courses. (Author)

Urban, UD

JUL 9 1971

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED055142

SIRS

SCHOOL INFORMATION AND RESEARCH SERVICE
FOR WASHINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 18, 1971

1970-71: 7

DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS IN URBAN GHETTO SCHOOLS

by

Dr. Louis Wildman

Educational Consultant

UD011848

Dr. Wildman has served as a research curriculum consultant in the Central Area schools of Seattle and most recently participated in an inservice project at Garfield High School, culminating in the publication of behavioral objectives for each course in their curriculum. He is also author of Discipline -- The Problem of Maintaining an Educational Environment (SIRS Bulletin 1969-70: 9, dated April 8, 1970).

127 LEWIS HALL ANNEX COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98105
TELEPHONE (206) 543-4940

DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS IN URBAN GHETTO SCHOOLS

by

Dr. Louis Wildman, educational consultant

The Problem

In many schools in this country everyone hopes to make it through the day without large-scale violence. Fights break out frequently. In many more schools the adult population is constantly brutalized, most often by verbal, but not infrequently by physical attack, unable pleasantly to teach and facilitate student self-fulfillment. Classes are noisy and rowdy.

Some large cities are seriously considering building what is euphemistically called the "total security school." In such a school, police would monitor every lavatory, hallway, and classroom with closed circuit TV cameras; directional microphones would be capable of monitoring or recording any conversation on the school grounds.

This article attempts to describe the group dynamics of the inner-city school by describing hypothetical examples of teacher peer group and student peer group support. Then follows a discussion of possible ways for improving the educational environment. Included within the recommendations are (1) student choice between an array of differentially controlled learning environments, (2) curriculum which offers the inexperienced student concrete experiences -- sometimes vocational -- necessary for theoretical analysis, and (3) standardized educational accountability within expository type courses in which the faculty simply wants to tell students about the experiences of the past in order that students might benefit from previous mistakes and failures.

A Basic Dilemma

Inner-city education is faced with this dilemma: If inner-city classrooms innovate -- creating comparatively free environments in which students can try out new ideas, express themselves, and take cognitive risks -- often these educational innovations are misperceived as a sign of weakness. Students believe teachers are unable to control them. They refuse to respect teachers who allow them to come to class late, sit around talking, and walk out of class any time they feel like it. On the other hand, if inner-city schools offer a traditional education which would be familiar to today's parents, their teaching method would be incongrous with some of the contemporary curriculum based upon the tentative nature of knowledge. Furthermore, if students cannot experiment and try out ideas, learning is impaired.

Expectation as a Psychological Determinant of Behavior

Student and teacher expectations of the educational experience are extremely important behavioral determinants. Cognitive or field psychologists claim that behavior is the result of (1) how a person sees himself, (2) how he sees the situations in which he is involved, and (3) the interrelations of these two. If you, as a reader of this paper, for example, feel that this reading will not contribute to your understanding of discipline problems, you probably will read no further. If you see no relationship between what is being discussed and what you may ever need, this paper will not have even a slight chance of changing your behavior.

Even within the S-R (Stimulus-Response) tradition, some educational psychologists have utilized the notion of individual expectation. Rotter, for example, postulated three basic concepts: behavior potential, expectancy, and reinforcement value. In his social learning theory these concepts are related in the following way: the potential that any behavior will occur in a given situation is dependent on the individual's

expectation concerning the occurrence of reinforcement in that situation and the value that reinforcement will have for him. Thus if a student feels that he is not in an educational environment, he will not learn. In fact, he probably will be a discipline problem. However, within inner-city schools social variables are also affecting behavior.

Peer Group Pressures

According to some educators, minority disciplinary problems are not distinguishable from those of non-minorities. They reason that middle class children experience the same social enculturation processes as lower class children except in intensity, and that like causes must produce like results.[1] Therefore, the only difference between the disciplinary problems of the embattled ghetto schools and the serene suburban schools is in intensity. Suburban school disciplinary problems, as viewed in this

---

[1]Notice the division made between middle and lower class children, rather than between White and Black children? Rokeach and Parker have recently reported findings, based upon the value choices of a national sample, which lend support to the idea that considerable value differences do distinguish the rich from the poor, but not Blacks from Whites. For the most part, differences between the latter disappear when socio-economic position is controlled. (a)

In questionnaire-type studies White college students in the North, border states, and the South (, c, d, e) and White teen-agers in California (f) have generally been found to prefer Blacks with beliefs, values, and personalities similar to their own to Whites with beliefs, values, and personalities dissimilar to their own.

However, as Rokeach points out: If discrimination on the basis of race is institution-alized or if there exists extreme social pressure to discriminate along racial lines (as is most clearly the case in the South or in South Africa), there is virtually no likelihood that social discrimination will occur on the basis of similarity of belief. (g)

(a) Rokeach, Milton and Parker, Seymour, "Values as Social Indicators of Poverty and Race Relations in America," The Annals, Vol. 388, March, 1970. Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 97-111.

(b) Rokeach, M., Smith, Particia W., and Evans, R. I. "Two Kinds of Prejudice or One?" In M. Rokeach, The Open and Closed Mind. New York: Basic Books, 1960.

(c) Byrne, D., and Wong, T. J. "Racial Prejudice, Interpersonal Attraction, and Assumed Dissimilarity of Attitudes." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1962, 65, 246-253.

(d) Rokeach, M., and Rothman, G. "The Principle of Belief Congruence and the Congruity Principle as Models of Cognitive Interaction." Psychological Review, 1965, 72, 128-142.

(e) Smith, Carole R., Williams, L., and Willis, R. H. "Race, Sex, and Belief as Determinants of Friendship Acceptance." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1967, 28, 477-486.

(f) Stein, D. D., Hardyck, Jane A., and Smith, M. B. "Race and Belief: An Open and Shut Case." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1, 281-289.

(g) Rokeach, Milton, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1968, 66.

light, rest primarily on individual conflict as compared to the corporate conflict which typifies the problems of ghetto schools. This reasoning depends upon the unwarranted assumption that the same social processes exist in both kinds of schools.

In contrast the crucial difference in classroom disciplinary problems between urban minority schools and suburban schools is peer group failure to support teacher and student role integrity while teachers and/or students are operating under conditions of severe role conflict.

Teacher Peer Group Support -- A Hypothetical Example

The new teacher, for example, is ushered into his career by administrators who often deny or generalize the problems of their schools, and who assure him that, if he can control the class, set up a good routine, and maintain composure, he will be a good teacher. Conversely, the bad teachers are those who cannot or will not control their classes.

The new teacher is appalled that the administration aims at mere control rather than teaching. Other teachers tell him that he must learn the techniques of control by force, or he will lose control and have to call the office for help, thus proving himself incompetent. The techniques they suggest, however, are offensive to his high ideals, and may even be illegal. So he vows to succeed without stooping to such practices.

Some of the other teachers know from experience what attitude to expect from the new teacher, so they simply say, "You'll either learn to control them, or they will drive you out." Then they wait until inevitably the new teacher comes to them. They will offer the same advice as offered earlier, with perhaps a touch more sympathy.

"On the first day of school," they advise, "watch for the first slight sign of a resistent child, and make an example of him with inordinate punishment. If you show the class that you are willing and able to do anything necessary to maintain control, the children will respect you. Rebellion will be short-lived, and then you will be free to teach them rather than wasting all your time trying to control them. This is better than fighting the whole class throughout the year."

"Don't get 'personally' involved," the other teachers warn. "Don't let them get to you; maintain your professional distance. They don't have anything against you as a person. They would treat any teacher the same way if they could get away with it. Set up routines to cover every activity. Students need the security a routine offers, and it allows you the greatest freedom of movement (i.e., the least personal contact with the children)."

Finally, "Master the techniques of force, and use force whenever necessary. If it is 'allowed,' don't spare the rod; if it isn't permitted, learn to hurt the child without being observed. Delegate violence. If the office will handle offenders, send them; if you can control the class bully,use him to mete out punishment; send notes home, and the parents will usually mete out punishment for you. Divide the class into rows, and restrict the whole row if someone in it is bad. The children will make the offender conform. Use the curriculum for punishment. Withhold gym, library, free time, trips, and parties until the children prove they are responsible (i.e. controlled and subdued). Learn the use of bribery and public ridicule."

At first the new teacher rejects these suggestions. He trys to let the students know that he loves them and understands their needs. He trys to bargain with them. If they will try, he will work in their behalf: "All I ask is that you try," he pleads. But what the students hear is something like, "If you'll be easy on me, I'll be easy on you; if you are bad, I don't know what I'll do." The children recognize his pleading attitude, sense weakness and undependability, and refuse to respect the offer. They soon drive him up the walls in terror. They push him into loss of self-control, the making of rules he can't enforce, and the making of threats he can't fulfill. Soon, everything he does further proves to them that he is at their mercy.

At this point the office may be called to help restore order. Usually vice-principals have no trouble restoring temporary order. The new teacher is shamed -- obviously incompetent -- before administrators, other teachers, and worst of all, before himself. At this stage, he will look for advice from the more experienced "chronic" teachers, and will start slowly but surely readjusting his methods and expectations to match theirs. As he becomes stricter as a disciplinarian his methods contradict his efforts to demonstrate the tentative nature of knowledge itself.

Compromising his values, however, creates a sense of guilt with which he can live only by compartmentalizing his professional and personal vaues. But this temporary resolution produces cognitive dissonance: the teacher's self-image cannot accommodate his methods, demanding permanent resolution. So he gradually adjusts his attitudes to conform to the necessity of his new methods. And he relies heavily upon the support of more experienced teachers to help him cope with his decision.

If he cannot get creative work from students, at least he can insist upon neat papers; if he cannot get them to do academic lessons, at least he can keep them busy with art work; if he cannot keep them productively employed at all, at least he can control them; if he cannot control them, at least he can contain them. No matter how bad the situation becomes, it could be worse, and he could be as bad as Mrs. Shelton, whose children run riot in the halls.

This reasoning, however, isn't arrived at alone. Every school has a teachers' lounge where teachers congregate during free periods and for lunch. Here they are different people, living in the world of their peer group. There when they talk about school, it is by way of complaint. Often their tales of woe take on the character of "top this if you can." There is always someone to commiserate and someone who has experienced worse failure. Classrooms are termed "the zoo" and the children are "animals" and "beasts." At the end of the teacher's free time, he is sent out validated as a teacher, but morally impotent as an educator. His peers have sent him back to his class prepared to do anything necessary to survive.

Meanwhile, the sanctions of administrators are less relevant and immediate, since they are concerned more with parents, community, and statistical evidence of mechanical success than with the survival of the teacher as a person. In some ways the methods and expectations of the administration toward the teacher may approximate the teacher's own methods and expectations toward pupils. All too often, these pressures combine only to discourage a teacher from "rocking the boat."

Thus, the basic steps to teacher destruction are:

1. Idealistic expectations

2. Initial failure

3. Disallusionment and hopelessness

4. A losing fight for survival and negative motivation

5. Peer group discrimination against official roles, and

6. Peer group support of the protagonist against the antagonist.

Student Peer Group Support - A Hypothetical Example

On the other hand, the child runs through the same cycle. In kindergarten and sometimes first grade, school is foisted upon the child as toys, recesses and fun, and he vainly expects the first teacher's individual loving care to continue.

Instead, as years pass, the fun decreases, the recesses shrink, the teachers spend more time controlling than relating as friends. They increasingly emphasize tasks above personal validation of the child. The whole structure seems intent upon sorting students, exposing the failures of even young children.

Yet, with every single failure, the teacher is sure to dangle hope of success, like a carrot on a string before a donkey, for the teacher knows that if the child has no hope, he cannot control him. And hope is the very thing that is lacking in the ghetto. The child becomes disillusioned early in the inner-city school. He may rebel against dehumanizing routines and constant subjection; he may reject the teacher's impossible ideas of success or the very idea of hope. After all, why should he accept the teacher's criteria of eventual success when he has his own criteria for immediate success. To do so is often like running a race he cannot possibly win, for a non-existant or worthless prize.

Yet teachers are too strong, and quickly punish rebellion. Only his friends and classmates understand his plight. Together they can express passive aggression, manipulate teacher behavior, and sometimes, especially with new teachers and substitutes, express their pent up hostility in open rebellion. As vengeance is sweet, so turning the tables on a weak or stupid teacher is the measure of true success.

Out of the pupil peer group a rebel leader emerges, who, by his unpunished rebellion, defines a somewhat lesser degree of general freedom from repression. And as the group uses this liberty to rebel, the leader can, with impugnity, escalate the contest for power into a virtual reign of terror which has driven many a novice teacher from the room, and not a few from the profession.[2]

Finally, the peer group corporately defines the antagonist and approved behavior. The antagonist defines the battle line of corporate conflict. This leaves the individual vulnerable. Survival depends upon either invisibility or support from the peer group. (The teacher cannot be invisible.) And so in ghetto schools children learn their most relevant skill: how to survive an oppressor in a perpetual state of war -- how

---

[2]Patrick Groff asked 294 teachers in 16 schools serving Black or Mexican-American "ghettos" in a large city why there was a high turn-over rate among teachers in these areas. Problems of discipline headed the list of specifics. ("Dissatisfaction in Teaching the Culturally Deprived Child," Phi Delta Kappan, 45, November, 1963, 76) Discipline is the number one school problem in the public view, according to a recent Gallop Poll -- of more concern than integration/segregation and finances.

to survive. Teachers, in turn, learn that "these children are impossible, unteachable, ungrateful animals, and that the only way to survive is through peer group solidarity, strict control, and "professional" distance.[3]

America's Future

If inner-city education is a form of social reconstruction geared to the long-range thrust of America's developmental needs, then a solution to this problem must make some assumptions about the future. Zbigniew Brzezinski visualizes three emerging Americas:

> There is the emerging new America symbolized by the new complexes of learning, research, and development that link institutions of higher learning with society and create unprecedented opportunities for innovation and experimentation, in addition to sparking increased interest in the fine arts and culture, as is evidenced by new museums and art centers. Technetronic America is in the electronics laboratories and centers of learning along Route 128 surrounding Boston; it is in the academic-scientific conglomerates around Los Angeles and San Francisco; and it is in the new frontier industries....
>
> Industrial America -- the second America -- is in the established factories and steel mills of Detroit and Pittsburgh, whose skilled blue-collar workers are gradually forgetting the traumas of the Great Depression and beginning to enjoy both security and leisure but are fearful lest their new social position be threatened from below. For this second America lives alongside the decaying slums of the industrial big cities, increasingly populated by a racial minority that is more difficult to absorb because the society was late in drawing it into the industrial age.
>
> Finally, there is the original, the first America, the pre-industrial America of sharecroppers and migrant workers from the Mississippi Delta and of obsolescent miners from Appalachia, whose income has fallen behind the American average. In this America, access to education is considerably less than elsewhere in the nation, and racial discrimination is overt.[4]

---

[3]Gottlieb studied how Black and White elementary school teachers view their work and the students they teach. Eighty-nine elementary school teachers, from six public schools of a medium-sized industrial community in the midwest, were the subjects of this research. These six schools were located in the "inner-city" and have a majority of students who are low-income Black. Fifty-three of the teachers were White and 36 were Black.

Each teacher was given a list of 33 adjectives and asked to check those adjectives which came closest to describing the outstanding characteristics of the children with whom he was working. The five items that were most frequently selected by White teachers in order of frequency were: "Talkative," "Lazy," "Fun loving," "High strung," and "Rebellious." The five items most frequently selected by Black teachers in order of frequency were: "Fun loving," "Happy," "Cooperative," "Energetic," and "Ambitious." (Gottlieb, David, "Teacher and Students: The Views of Negro and White Teachers," Sociology of Education, 27 (Summer, 1964), 245-353.)

[4]Brezinsky, Zbigniew, Between Two Ages. New York: The Viking Press, 1970, 200-201.

Specifically, if the poor are to break the circle of poverty, they must enter "technetronic America."

The Role of the So-Called Academic Disciplines in Relation to Vocational Training

The most direct way to reach "technetronic America" is by getting a credible background in mathematics, the arts, and the social and physical sciences, because the course content in these so-called academic fields involves the acquisition of concepts which model innumerable specific applications and experiences. The ability, however, to generalize directly depends upon understanding at least a few specific referants covered by the generalization. If a student has not had experiences within a given domain of reference, it is futile to expect him to generalize. And why should he be asked to try? Practical examples and experience can administratively be arranged. But practical, applied education filled with concrete examples and skills, including vocational practice, should be conceived as simply a different road to synthesis, analysis, and evaluation.

Once students with limited experience are acquainted with practical illustrations they can proceed to more inclusive generalizations. Shay has shown that, "even including the time factor, more New York State terminal-program graduates who transferred to four-year institutions were successful in earning the baccalaureate than were students who came primarily from transfer-oriented programs but who transferred after varying amounts of time in junior colleges. Three years after transfer, 69% of the terminal-transfer men had earned the baccalaureate, compared with 61% of male transfer students generally.[5]

Conant contended in his book Slums and Suburbs that students from poor families "fit" occupational training programs.[6] He argued that schooling for jobs is the answer to the plight of the poor because, to a considerable degree, what a school can do is determined by the status and ambitions of the families being served. Advocates of vocational education have picked up this argument with the implication that what a school "should do" is also determined by the status and ambitions of the families being served. Unfortunately, a "relevant" vocational education is the current answer to solving disciplinary problems in inner-city schools. Advocates of narrow vocational education for the poor do not consider the consequent waste of talent among the economically, politically, and culturally submerged of the United States and other countries. Nor do they honor the ideal of the individual's right to transcend the humble circumstances of his family. Basing education on presumed subsequent employment implies a static deterministic society based on family background and a stable occupational structure.

I do not anticipate a stable occupational structure. Furthermore, if this country intends to break the circle of poverty, we cannot continue to direct our poor into vocational education. Rather, educators, in my opinion, should use audio-visual and simulation technology, and employ teachers who can provide an abundance of specific experiences for their students in the context of credible theoretical and conceptual education. Few teachers, unfortunately, have had this professional experience.

---

[5]Shay, Thomas Moore, "A Study of Terminal-Program Students Who Transferred in 1961 from Public Two-Year Colleges in the State of New York," unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Berkeley, California: University of California, 1966.

[6]Conant, James Bryant, Slums and Suburbs. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961, 1.

Most large schools have a number of sections at each level in the same subject, yet each section in inner-city schools is typically taught in a "relaxed" manner, approximating a "discussion" method for want of a justifying title. On the other hand students believe they know when a situation becomes educationally dysfunctional. Generally, their model of a proper educational environment tends to be stricter than that of most liberally oriented professional educators. Thus student expectations lead them to misinterpret laissez faire experiments. Inner-city students, therefore, should be allowed to choose the kind of environment in which they wish to learn. If a student would rather spend his time reading individually, than listen to a lecture, this should be his right. If a student would rather participate in a seminar than work on his own, again this should be an available option. Choice of learning mode between distinctly different environments enables teachers to justifiably enforce rules necessary to the environment's maintenance. When coupled with stated minimum behavioral curricular objectives, applicable regardless of learning mode, a school avoids destructive wide swings from permissive and guilt-ridden acquiescence to passivity or opposition to all demands for quality education.

Garfield, a Black high school, surrounded by Seattle's ghetto, has (to go into effect starting with the 1971-72 school year), minimum level behavioral objectives for each course. These behavioral objectives are published and available to students, counselors, and faculty. Each behavioral objective includes three parts: its subject, the minimally acceptable performance level, and the conditions under which performance is to be demonstrated. Statement of these behavioral objectives permits enforcement of standards, both for individual courses and for a high school degree, public accountability, and vastly improved academic counseling and guidance.

There is a pervasive notion that inner-city students are uniformly unable to recognize quality. Quite to the contrary; Scott Buchanan, for example, has written of a Yale program for ghetto kids in which a very good, though difficult, book by Faulkner was tried. The students worked harder and got a lot more out of it than their prior experiences with simplified and so-called relevant books. The principle here is: recognize student perceptions, or everyone recognizes pap when they see it!

Technetronic Society's Norms

Robert Dreeban has identified four norms which have particular relevance to participation in a technetronic society: independence, achievement, universalism, and specifity. These norms offer a way of looking at social behavior, indirectly at least, avoiding direct confrontation with cultural differences, by pairing independence (accepting personal responsibility and accountability for an individual's conduct along with its consequences), with conformity to group decisions; achievement, with defenseless dependence upon the judgment of others; and universalism, with specificity: treat me fairly, but as an individual. (When a new-comer breaks into a long line instead of proceeding to the end of the line, we condemn him for acting unfairly -- i.e., universalism. When a blind man walks down the sidewalk we move to one side, allowing special consideration for his uniqueness -- i.e. specificity.) These norms may provide the basis for discussion of behavior patterns with small groups of inner-city youth, raising ethical decisions above cultural mannerisms. But White, middle class teachers need not be fooled. Talking back to adults in a rude manner is not permitted in homes of poor Black or White children. Nor, obviously, is violent fighting or stealing.[7]

---

[7]A recent article (March 27, 1971) in the Christian Science Monitor on school discipline quoted Mrs. Rosamary Bell, Black principal of a poverty-area elementary school in Louisville, Ky., as saying: "There's no free person, we tell children, everyone has responsibilities. However, teachers planning to teach in the inner-city might increase their sensitivity to student problems by living in the area and encountering the same problems these people face. There are many inconsistencies between regulations in and out of school, including vocational environments.

The Utility of Social Organizations

Behavior can be thought of as ways of adapting or coping with forces which impinge on an individual. The poor tend to perceive that even rapid change will not change much for many in the near future. This raises the question of how ghetto students can rise above their feelings of powerlessness. Traditionally, this question has been answered with the formation of social organizations -- a brotherhood of devoted men. Organizations which foster role integrity are still needed. (See Spaulding, Charles B., Bolin, Ruth S., "The Cliques as a Device for Social Adjustment," Journal of Educational Sociology, XXIV (November, 1950), 1947-153.)

Accountability

This country must avoid the graduation of students not subject to prevailing academic standards. Otherwise we will inevitably produce, in growing numbers, the American equivalent of the frustrated and badly educated pseudo intelligentsia of the global ghettos found in the over-populated countries.

Statement of behavioral objectives is a crucial first step towards accountability, but it is only that. If, for example, you give an adolescent some simple model and merely test to see that he has memorized it, when he passes your test, he believes he has "training." With "training" he knows what should be done, and is frustrated when things don't go the way he is "trained" to know they should function. In sum, nothing is so frightening than ignorance in action. Much of education is investigatory in nature, but to the extent that education transmits a seasoned heritage, i.e., expository teaching, to that extent, at least, all schools should be accountable for that learning which they certify.

Other Recommendations

Finally, the reader should study the steps of teacher and student destruction presented above. Teachers must know their alternatives. They should never need fabricate a punishment or alternative which cannot be carried out. A district's list of alternatives should cover all possibilities, should be approved by legal counsel, and should offer a wide variety of alternatives. (See "A Chart to Guide Action" presented in SIRS bulletin 1969-70: 9, called Discipline: The Problem of Maintaining an Educational Environment.) Spanking a child, administered under certain rare circumstances, can be used positively.[8]

---

[8]There is a meaningful distinction which can be drawn between punishment and negative reinforcement. Punishment refers to a situation in which the recipient has no choice but to receive the penalty once he is pronounced guilty. Negative reinforcement, on the other hand, refers to distasteful consequences which the recipient can stop receiving as soon as he behaves acceptably.

Imagine a situation in which a teacher and a group of children are bothered by a child who makes a nuisance of himself. If the remainder of the class and the teacher regard his annoying behavior as such, and not as a source of amusement, then there is a high probability that the child will gradually improve his behavior, avoiding this negative reinforcement, especially if the student's appropriate behavior is reinforced. Punishment paradoxically, often provides the misbehaving child with the attention and rewards he desires.

So often teachers are forced to spend most of their time with the students who cause discipline problems. The students who do behave are ignored. Teachers should reward approved behavior with attention. At our present level of educational psychological knowledge, to do so requires small classes (6 or 7) in which the physical environment is so accoustically insolated, arranged, and large enough so that the teacher and students can ignore, i.e. not reward, obnoxious behavior. Even then, there cannot be more than one such child in the classroom. Obviously this environment is not found in many urban schools.

Group restrictions, because of the violations of a few, are not just -- nor are they very useful. Obviously, public ridicule is a poor technique. A student may thereby gain sympathy, increasing peer group pressure and student role deterioration.

Support programs which utilize the volunteer forces in the community (university students, old people, mothers, unemployed, professionals) foster generational interaction, which in turn tends to produce more mature behavior. Programs in which older students help younger ones utilize this variable and also have proven helpful in getting a student to understand the larger problems of education.

A teacher's mental health is vital. If a teacher loses his ideals and aspirations, all of his students suffer. Administrators and teachers must recognize how easily this can happen. They need to provide the encouragement all need to prevent it.